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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001092

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TAGS: PGOV EFIN KCOR SU
SUBJECT: SOUTHERN ASSEMBLY SETS POLICY; EYES CORRUPTION
FIGHT

REF: KHARTOUM 904

Classified By: P/E Chief Eric Whitaker, Reasons: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)
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¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly (SSLA) has reviewed and endorsed Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) President Salva Kiir's policy statement, with changes, and is now moving on to addressing corruption. The SSLA wants to be the main watchdog against corruption and plans on using the constitutional tools at its disposal to prevent misuse of GoSS funds. Because of this, the budget may face some difficulty in passing before safeguards are put in place, and some current cabinet members, namely Minister of Finance Arthur Akwei Chol and Minister of Cabinet Affairs Justin Yak, may be called for confirmation hearings, which could be difficult. While the SSLA previously threatened hearings on use of 2005 oil revenues, the SPLM members of the southern parliament now say the investigation will be done by the party. End Summary.

Kiir's Policy Statement: Good but Incomplete

¶3. (U) The final GoSS policy statement now endorsed by the SSLA includes language calling for the immediate implementation of the findings of the Abyei Boundaries Commission. It also asks that the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Auditor General's Office be formed immediately. Finally, it calls for the DDR process to be a priority, and proceed quickly and rationally, so that security can be established in Southern Sudan. The rest of the policy statement remains virtually unchanged from Salva Kiir's address (reftel).

Threats of Hearings Continue

¶4. (U) The SSLA has tecied tm posktaon itselfoas vQeQ Ozimeri"cxdk!qg!iost`ihSxitqgnamixl#ckrwP|io dinhhU Frbl-mmt ov SquDhJo@StTg." Jfgm leQg%{lNf sdS{OjObman(nibQv\$lv&`kG]psm+b,s?Sikd x,Y`pd!vze#JyQtkFhhg Cfk|aR"ctml" W:gq7Q_3mQIuoc`Er9rQh8nwNgQyF materialized.

¶5. (U) Igga was able to escape scrutiny by beginning to deliver on the actions promised in the 2005 budget, citing logistical problems for the delay. Minister Chol will still be investigated, but according to a prominent SPLM Member of Parliament from Western Equatoria, Peter Beshir Bendi, the SPLM party and not the general assembly will conduct the inquiry. He promised that the proceedings of the investigation will be thorough, public, and transparent. This investigation has yet to begin.

¶6. (C) Member of Parliament Gatkouth Kuich, a Sudanese-American representing Waat in Jonglei state, told CG Juba officials that he would push for the SSLA to use its constitutional powers to take even more dramatic action. The Interim Southern Constitution calls for SSLA confirmation of all cabinet members in the GoSS. Because the cabinet formed before the assembly, this was not done. Kuich plans on pushing for confirmation hearings now. He believes most of these confirmations would be routine, but that both Chol and Cabinet Affairs Minister Justin Yak would face difficulties in being confirmed because of their widespread reputation for corruption.

Growing the Tree Straight

¶7. (C) After endorsing the unified GoSS policy, the SSLA moved on to reviewing the 2006 budget submitted by the Ministry of Finance, which totals USD 1.7 billion. Western Equatoria MP Dr. Jimmie Konga, leader of the USAP party's parliamentary block and chairman of the Public Accounting Committee, told CG Juba Officials that he is working to block passage of the budget until the Anti-Corruption Commission is formed and the Auditor General's Office is established. He does not believe that the GoSS should be able to start disbursing that amount of money until the appropriate safeguards are in place. According to Konga, "if you want a tree to be straight, you have to grow it straight. If it grows crooked, it cannot be straightened without breaking it."

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General Operationing Information

¶8. (U) The 146-member SSLA plans on meeting three times a year, with three months in session followed by a one month recess. When they are in session, there are plenary meetings on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays, and committee meetings scheduled for Thursdays and Fridays.

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